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# *Nicaragua neighbors nearly unanimous in opposing contra aid*

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WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration's most difficult hurdle in persuading Congress to approve \$100 million for the contra guerrillas has been explaining why nearly all Latin American countries, including Nicaragua's closest neighbors, voice opposition to aiding the rebels.

The question has come up repeatedly in all of the hearings where administration witnesses have testified on Reagan's proposal.

The foreign ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela — the Contadora group — and of Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay met with Secretary of State George P. Shultz on Feb. 10 to urge the United States to stop supporting the contras and to focus on diplomatic solutions, such as the Contadora initiative for a negotiated regional settlement.

When Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams told a House subcommittee this week that "some of them who say one thing publicly, say another thing privately," Rep. Peter Kostmayer (D., Pa.) an opponent of aid to the contras, said that was "a new version of double-speak."

"You're saying they went to all that trouble to send their foreign ministers here, a highly unusual action, saying something totally counter to their private view and that they are cheering us on?" Kostmayer asked.

After Abrams made the same argument to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. Claiborne Pell (D., R.I.) said it is "immaterial" whether Latin American leaders have different private views. "We have to go by what they say publicly, on the record."

The opposition from neighboring nations has harmed the administration's argument that Nicaragua is a threat to nearby states and that only military pressure by the contras will force the Sandinistas into negotiations to curb that threat.

Reagan said this week that if the contra aid is defeated the "small and

fragile democracies" of Central America would be in danger.

But the newly elected leaders of both Costa Rica and Guatemala have spoken against the aid. President Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador has not said whether he supports it.

The government of Honduras, where most of the contras are based, has blocked American humanitarian aid to the contras for nearly six months.

Costa Rica, said by Washington to be the victim of Nicaraguan cross-border subversion, has recently concluded a Contadora-sponsored agreement with the Sandinista government for an international border-observation team.

Oscar Arias Sanchez, Costa Rica's president-elect, has said he agrees with the administration that the Nicaraguans have betrayed their promises and "built a second Cuba." But he said American aid to the contras "won't get what Mr. Reagan wants. On the contrary, they are giving an excuse to the Sandinistas to become more dictatorial, more totalitarian."

Augusto Ramirez Ocampo, the foreign minister of Colombia, another country Washington says is a target for Nicaraguan-backed terrorism, said after meeting with Shultz that the U.S. position is "intransigent and extreme."

Shultz, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week, was asked three times to name a single country that supports the American policy. Shultz limited his replies to saying "some are" supporting it, but would not name any.

House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D., Mass.) said Wednesday, "I haven't met a world leader who agrees with American policy."

In their Feb. 10 meeting with Shultz, the eight foreign ministers proposed a diplomatic initiative that includes a cessation of rebel aid and direct meetings between the United States and Nicaragua. They were turned down on both counts.